

Jo Davidson

STAT

May, 1960

Dear Mr. Felt,

I have been provoked by recent incidents to write to you, passing on to you my observations in the hope that you will give them careful consideration which will lead you to take some appropriate constructive and positive action relevant to the issues in question.

In my opinion, our President and State Department have acted irresponsibly, recklessly, and dangerously in permitting (or ordering) our resumption of nuclear testing (even for purposes of "improving detection") before we have reached some kind of detection experiment agreement with Russia. By what logic can we place such complete and total trust in another nation (in this case, Russia) that we place in her hands the entire weight of responsibility and discretion, in the "hope" that she will be constructively cautious (assuming she is constructive and not suicidal) enough not to retaliate either "in kind" or with some even harsher reaction? The State Department and the President have issued statements which have been of an equally unwise and irresponsible nature, in reacting to the Russian's indignation over the spy plane incident. But, this action of resuming nuclear testing is even more concretely reckless than these statements, coming at a time when it can (and undoubtedly will) be interpreted as a defiantly belligerent "eye for an eye" gesture. If indeed (as the State Department has said), the resumption of nuclear testing had "nothing to do with the spy plane incident," then it is all the more ridiculous that they let it go through, without stopping it, knowing, as they do, how it would be interpreted.

Our State Department should certainly know better than to bait the Russians, or give them any further provocation than we already have in flying planes over her territory without her permission. Soviet Russia's own record of abuses and our knowledge of her established brutality and immorality of governmental principles and actions should be even more reason for exercising caution in our relations with her. What can be more reckless than giving a proved madman or criminal provocation to turn on you, when you are not in a stabilized, secure position of control, where he is not safely locked in a padded cell? Under such circumstances, if you do not handle a dangerous lunatic with "kid gloves," you yourself are "out of your mind"! If you go into a lion's cage and proceed to "tease" him with a stick, you are the one most responsible for your own inevitable, logical destruction, because you have provoked it!

In the light of this fact, the President's and Secretary of State's petulant reactions to Russia's indignation are misplaced and unconstructive in character. Furthermore, their assertions that our aggressive act in flying over Russia is justified by our defense requirements is an illogical stand, detrimental to our own self interest.

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With your own self-interest as the value at stake (even in terms of "need" as defined by their assertion), you cannot legitimately defend an imposition of your will on others, whom you are in no position to treat other than equally (Because, even if they are mad, you cannot lock the Russian leaders in padded cells, because they have evaded responsibility for each of their madnesses by "justifying" them, just as you are now trying to justify your own imposition of will), on the basis of an immediate need, at the long-range sacrifice of a more primary, fundamental need--the need to have your own rights respected). You cannot expect your rights to be respected unless you respect the rights of others. If you do not, you are setting a moral pattern--a pattern of moral anarchy--which is clearly against your own best interests. Since, obviously, we cannot either shoot the Russian leaders, or lock them up, our only logical course is to try to teach them the benefits of a moral society (one which respects the rights of individuals --all individuals), and, again obviously, we cannot accomplish this except by practising our own basic philosophy. We must lead the way; we cannot expect Russia to do so, when her basic philosophy is anti-individual. When Russia commits acts of aggression, she is being consistent with her basic philosophy, so why should it surprise us?

If we expect to teach Russia the advantages of an ethical system, we had better be sure we understand them ourselves, and practise them, instead of acting unethically ourselves and then expecting Russia to act ethically--to practise our own morality, which we ourselves refuse to observe. When you hold a double standard of morality (one for yourself and another for the other fellow), you cannot expect him to hold a single standard of ethical conduct; if we expect Russia to be honest in her future dealings with us, we will have to be honest in admitting that, in this instance, we were morally wrong in principle, rather than saying in effect, "I can do anything I want to, because I am me." The fact that Russia herself is a master specialist in taking this double-standard attitude does not alter our responsibility to call the shots, both ours and Russia's, with logic and honesty.

In this specific instance, Eisenhower should be honest enough to see that (regardless of what he, or others, see as a "defensive necessity" and, therefore, see a free sky agreement as a desirable goal to achieve) this does not alter the fact that we committed an aggressive action in flying over Russia for "defense" purposes until such an agreement was concluded.

Of course, a more basic question is: Can an emphasis on defensive military preparation be as effective for either party involved as a concentrated effort to reach a reasonable, workable agreement, a resolution of difference, whereby both parties can live in mutual respect and grow in a healthy way without fear of either one's imposing on the other, either in terms of small acts of aggression such as the present spy plane incident, or by larger acts, such as Russia has committed, in forcing policies and control upon vulnerable weaker nations.

Even if (through fear and suspicion aroused because of past surprise attacks by other nations on the U.S.) we do succeed in observing in ad-

vance all of any nation's military preparations, can one logically say that preparing to destroy that nation or its military installations is really the answer? Or, regardless of what course is being taken inside that nation, does not our primary self interest lie in preventing the necessity of both nation's either needing or using such militaristic defense, by actively working to achieve the best interests of both nations through the mutually self-interested means of hard work and moral integrity?

The fight over free skyways (as any issue) should properly be conducted in words, showing the other party how your particular stand on this issue is to his equal self-interest with your own (assuming, of course, that it can logically be proved to be to the equal interest of both parties, if it, indeed, can be proved to be beneficial to either--beneficial at all; and, while this particular policy--open skyways--could conceivably be advantageous to both parties, its use for spying purposes is not particularly healthy, constructive, or conducive to a real, cooperative effort in the working out of problems to the mutual satisfaction of both parties.)

This mutuality (or equality of self-interest) is the only real, logical basis, the only logical reason for making any proposal, since inequity in one action invariably leads to trouble in the future for the party who got the "edge" in the original transaction. There must be, if there is to be real peace and respect between nations, an equal give and take.

This country is big enough and we should feel confident enough to be ABLE to admit an error when we make one, and not find it necessary to become emotionally, belligerently defensive when we are called to task for it. Certainly, Russia's moral right to speak up (according to our basic moral philosophy) remains clear and unaltered by any specific reasons and motivations behind Krushchev's reactions, as speculated upon (or even, substantially proved) by political scientists in this, or other, countries. Certainly also, it is perfectly reasonable and valid for us to look into and examine carefully the reasons for Krushchev's reaction, but this does not reduce our responsibility for incurring this reaction.

Each of the President's and Secretary of State's replies asserting that our flight was "justified" and then that we intend to continue making such flights in attempting to learn military secrets, only served to compound the error in judgement (resulting in action detrimental to our self interest) of the flight itself. This official attitude of ours, not only from the standpoint of its immediate effect upon Russia and upon the Geneva conference, but also, from a broader, more basic moral standpoint, upon ourselves and the entire world, represents a kind of dangerous, emotionally defensive stand which should be entirely unnecessary for any country having the fearlessness that goes with the strength of real moral integrity.

To defend our action on the basis that "Russia spies on us" (even if it weren't illogical considering the fact that Russia's aggressiveness is consistent with her philosophy) would still be illogical even if her basic philosophy were identical with ours. You don't commit an error in judgement on the basis that "everybody is doing it," whether that error lies in a basic philosophy or in an error of practical application. If you are thinking straight, you don't do anything, or think anything is "all right", just

because "everybody's doing it". Should we make destructive choices just because Russia, or anyone else, chooses to make them? Certainly, it should be patently clear that, if you acted continually and consistently on a basic philosophy of "an eye for an eye", eventually both you and your adversary will have stripped the flesh from one another, until there is nothing left of you but two skeletons. What purpose does retribution serve when it leads only to self-destruction?

As far as Russia's right (though she is certainly no "lily") to call us to account for the spy flight, while we are equally correct in calling her to account for any such aggressions on her part (without, however, having to "manufacture" them), it is equally legitimate for Russia to express herself about us. A "pot" is entirely justified in calling a "Kettle" black, if in fact, it is black, even though the pot may be just as black, or blacker.

Neither Russia nor the United States (nor any other nation) has to wait --in fact, should not and morally cannot wait--until either is "Perfect" or "lily white" before calling the shots as they are. Certainly no U.S. statesman would advocate waiting until our own country is in absolute "apple-pie" order before daring to call Russia to account for her mistakes (moral misjudgements) affecting us. Anyone in his right mind knows that such a course would be utterly unrealistic. If everyone waited until he were spotless in every respect (or even in any one respect, or that particular respect) before speaking up about the errors made by others, teaching would become a thing of the past. No one would ever open his mouth to communicate again, and our human capacity to teach (and to learn from) others would be lost. Without our ability and our right to use that ability to communicate our thinking, we would, indeed, no longer be "human".

In the case of our resumption of nuclear testing and our failure to continue a moratorium until an agreement can be reached banning all nuclear tests, our action is indefensible. Detection tests should be regarded as part of a two-way, equal agreement, and they should be conducted accordingly, not by one party going ahead on its own! Insofar as nuclear testing as a "defense preparation", I think I have demonstrated that, quite aside from the devastating effects from tests already made (estimated, according to United Nations and Atomic Energy reports, to cause to our future citizens as many as 150,000 cases of leukemia, 100,000 gross mental or physical defects, 380,000 cases of stillbirth), such "preparation" is utterly illogical unless what we are "preparing" for is to become skeletons!

Our only practical and logical course, unless we intend to commit mass suicide, is to do everything humanly possible to achieve total agreement on the banning of nuclear weapons and the banning of testing of such weapons, and then proceed to an agreement on total disarmament.

I urge you most strongly to take whatever action you can to avoid in the future such irresponsible statements and actions, as I have cited, and, for now, to try to correct the situation that now exists in the form of tension between the United States and Russia. The first action we should take along this line is to cease our nuclear detection experiment tests until we have agreed on a mutually satisfactory experiment plan, and, then,

most important of all, to act as constructively as humanly possible in attempting to reach a total test ban agreement. Let's get the cold war settled once and for all!

I very much appreciate your taking the time to reach this somewhat lengthy letter and to consider carefully and thoughtfully these issues, which are as vital to your own well being as they are to mine and those of my friends and neighbors. I should appreciate an answer containing your reactions and thinking on these important issues. However, I hope you will take your time in replying, giving each factor your careful, judicious consideration. Your sincere, concerted efforts along this line are far more important to me than receiving an immediate, hasty reply.

Sincerely,


Jo Davidson



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SUBSEQUENT EVENTS: The blowup of the Summit Conference by Krushchev's demands for a full apology accompanied by a change in our policy of spying on Russia is the logical consequence of our own action. The fact that Krushchev's indignation over the spy plane incident as expressed in Paris led to Eisenhower's quick retraction of his previous assertion that such flights would continue is indicative of the basic moral correctness of Krushchev's position in this instance. But, Eisenhower's reluctance to go all the way in offering an official US. apology (even announcing the change of policy concerning future flights under such extreme pressure that he appears to have his back to the wall) is seriously detrimental to U.S. integrity, prestige and moral responsibility in the setting of an atmosphere of ill-will through a position we took which now it can obviously be seen was so blatantly erroneous that it served to endanger the efficacy of the Summit Conference.

PLEASE SEND COPIES OF YOUR REPLY TO EACH OF THE FOLLOWING INTERESTED PARTIES:

NAME

ADDRESS

SENDER WILL CHECK CLASSIFICATION TOP AND BOTTOM					
UNCLASSIFIED		CONFIDENTIAL		SECRET	
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP					
TO	NAME AND ADDRESS	INITIALS	DATE		
1	Col Grogan	<i>AG</i>	JUL 13 1960		
2					
3					
4	STAT				
5					
6					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ACTION	<input type="checkbox"/>	DIRECT REPLY	<input type="checkbox"/>	PREPARE REPLY
<input type="checkbox"/>	APPROVAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	DISPATCH	<input type="checkbox"/>	RECOMMENDATION
<input type="checkbox"/>	COMMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	FILE	<input type="checkbox"/>	RETURN
<input type="checkbox"/>	CONCURRENCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	INFORMATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	SIGNATURE

Remarks:

Stan: Have you ever heard of this fellow Jo Davidson?

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Do you have any particular suggestions as to a reply?

Frank - No
This is a circular letter containing many false statements + recommend file = no reply.

SUSPENSE: 22 July 1960

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Stan

FOLD HERE TO RETURN TO SENDER

NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NO.	DATE
Asst to the DCI	12 Jul 60